



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Local Government and Communities**

Local Government Operational Guidelines

Number 04 – June 2011

Elected Member Induction

1. Introduction

Local government is involved in a very diverse range of issues that have a direct impact on the community and its way of life. This provides elected members with many exciting challenges in effectively dealing with these issues. It is therefore vitally important that newly elected members quickly become aware of the operation of the local government, the current issues that the local government is dealing with and, most importantly, their responsibilities and the role expected of them.

Some newly elected members will begin their roles with prior knowledge of their local government's operations and the relevant legislation under which it works. Others may not have a great deal of knowledge.

A thorough induction program will effectively assist newly elected members to understand their roles and responsibilities as members of council and what is expected of them. This guideline will assist Chief Executive Officers [CEOs] and Mayors/Presidents in the development and delivery of such an induction program.

2. Developing an Induction manual

To assist elected members to understand their roles and responsibilities, CEOs should consider the development of an appropriate 'Elected Members Induction Manual'. The 'Induction Checklist' included in this guideline will assist in developing the Manual and ensure all relevant topics are adequately covered. Publications likely to be needed as part of the induction program should also be identified.

The Manual may form the basis of the induction program instituted by the CEO and be in a format that provides a ready reference for new members.

3. Determining Suitable New Member Induction Procedures

Local governments are free to conduct induction programs that best suit their needs. The development and adoption of procedures covering issues as set out below, in conjunction with the use of the 'Induction Checklist', will facilitate a thorough induction program.

Timing

The new member induction should take place as soon as possible after the election. The 'declaration ceremony' presents an ideal opportunity to welcome new elected members, to acknowledge the significance of their election to represent the local community and to commence the induction process.

Attendance at the ceremony and an associated social gathering by the new members' families, existing elected members and their partners, the CEO and senior officers of the local government would be a positive team building exercise. All can use the social gathering to get to know one another and establish relationships with those that they will need to communicate and work with.

While it would be preferable in the interests of team building to have all newly elected members attend a 'declaration ceremony' together, legally the declaration of office by an elected member can be made before an authorised witness, who can be a JP, or the CEO, at any time within two months after the declaration of the election.

Newly elected members should be made aware that one of their first duties will be to elect the Mayor/President [where not elected by the electors], Deputy Mayor/President and appointment of members to committees. If your local government does this immediately following the 'declaration ceremony', then newly elected members should be provided with information on the election process as an initial part of the induction program.

Pre-planning by the CEO will allow him or her to formally advise all of the candidates for election of the proposed timetable for the 'declaration ceremony' and induction program. Such notice will enable candidates to make their own tentative arrangements subject to their being elected.

Induction is a Shared Responsibility

Inductions will be more effective and beneficial if considered to be the shared responsibility of the CEO, the Mayor or President and the newly elected members. Ideally, the briefings by the Mayor or President and CEO would cover important local government operational issues such as meeting procedures, council structure, Code of Conduct and the roles and responsibilities of elected members.

Provision should be made in the induction program to enable the Mayor or President the opportunity to brief the newly elected members and provide guidance and advice from the elected members' perspective.

In the time period between the 'declaration ceremony' and the first council or committee meetings, new members have a responsibility to prepare themselves for their new role on council by full and active participation in the induction

program. This can be through the study of the resource material provided by the CEO which may include a council agenda, past minutes, current and proposed budget, a briefing on current issues, Standing Orders, the Code of Conduct, Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations and an Induction Manual.

Local Government District Tour and Briefing

A tour of the district for the new members incorporating an onsite inspection of major works in progress or pending, inspection of council facilities and a briefing by relevant staff on the local government's facilities and services can be a valuable learning experience when incorporated into the induction program.

Induction Follow Up

A follow-up program should be held between six and nine months after the induction. This follow-up involving the Mayor/ President, new members and the CEO, will help to identify and address any areas where additional support, training or development could be provided to the members. It is also a great opportunity to obtain feedback from the new members with a view to improving the induction program.

4. Induction Checklist

General Information

Declaration of Office

- When and where
- Making the declaration of office
- Code of Conduct
- Include advice that an offence is committed if the member elected acts as elected member prior to making the necessary declaration of office

Induction Briefings

- By Mayor/President
- By CEO
- By senior staff on facilities and services
- By others
- Tour of local government facilities

Induction/Training Courses Available

- “Getting Started” a module for newly elected members
- Local Government Week elected member training and development
- Elected Member Development Training Modules
- Mayors/Presidents Support Program [specifically for newly elected Mayors/Presidents]
- Other training both in-house and off-site

Importance of Honesty and Integrity

- Inform elected members that it is essential that at all times they act with utmost honesty, integrity, transparency and accountability, for their own benefit, their local government and that of the sector
- Disclosure of Interests Affecting Impartiality

Disclosure of Financial Interest in Returns

- Primary and Annual Returns – when and how
- Include advice of the significant penalties for failing to complete returns, providing false information and how to update information

Access to Council Offices/Chambers

- Restrictions on entry and access to Council Offices or Chambers during and after normal working hours
- Keys and key register
- Electronic security systems

Use of Council Property and Equipment

- Code of conduct, policy and guidelines
- Use of photocopiers, facsimiles, administration services, computers, e-mail, stationery, elected member rooms/offices
- Council and members’ stationery, (eg. business cards not to be used for electioneering)
- Misuse of local government resources
Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations

Parking

- Reserved parking and arrangements for council and committee meetings

Dress Standards

- For meetings and functions of council

Seating Arrangements

- For council and committee meetings

House Rules

- Prohibition on smoking
- Use and access to council facilities and refreshments
- Entertainment of guests
- Gifts and memorabilia
- Protocol for use of website

Media Comment

- *Local Government Act 1995* requirements
- How this applies to the local government and individual elected members

Elected Member Fees and Expenses

- *Local Government Act 1995* section 5.98 - 5.102, and regulations 30–34 AB of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*
- How this applies to the local government and individual elected members

Insurance

- Extent of council insurance policies covering elected members

Defamation and Limited Privilege Protection

- What this means for elected members

Government Records

- Effect of *State Records Act 2000* on elected members' mail and other documents

Publications

- Checklist of publications and documents issued to newly elected members

5. Council Organisation

The Council

- Constitution of council and how elected. Include explanation of extraordinary elections
- Mayor/President and how elected, and for how long
- Ward representation map (if wards are in place)
- Expectation of members to work for the district as a whole rather than in isolation (wards)
- Names and contact details of all elected members
- General functions power, s3.1 of the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act)
- Legislative power, s3.5 of the Act
- Executive functions, s3.18 of the Act

Main functions of Local Government

- Brief outline of services eg:
 - Planning
 - Works
 - Waste
 - Environmental Management
 - Economic Development
 - Community Development
 - Animal Control
 - Social Services
 - Sport and Recreation

Employees

- Organisational chart
- Names and contact details of senior employees
- Names and contact details of elected member support employees
- Policy(ies) on employee contact by elected members

Relationship between Council and Employees

- Roles and functions of the elected members, ss2.7 to 2.10, 5.2 and 5.41 of the Act
- Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 9 to 10

Electors

- Names and contact details of principal community groups and elector/ratepayer organisations
- Names and contact details of principal lobby groups in the local community

6. Meetings

Council Meetings

- Number of meetings per month
- Dates and venues for meetings
- Disclosure of Financial Interest and Conflict of Interest requirements
- Voting requirements, s5.21 of the Act

Committee Meetings

- Committee types, membership and functional responsibilities
- Dates and venues for meetings
- How and when representation to each committee is determined

Other Meetings

- Annual Electors Meeting
- Council Forums
- WALGA Meetings
- Local Government Week
- National General Assembly of Local Government

Conduct of Meetings

- Standing Orders as local laws governing meeting procedures
- How applied at council and committee meetings
- Public question time procedures for council and committee meetings
- Information provided should also include advice on how to propose motions and amendments to motions at council meetings

Agendas and Minutes

- How and when delivered
- Obligation on members to read and understand
- Process and procedure of compilation

Absence from Meetings

- Protocol for taking leave of absence
- Protocol for making an apology for a meeting
- Disqualification for not attending the number of meetings, as specified in the Act, without leave of absence

7. Council Operations

Strategic Plan and Plan for the Future of the district

- Copy to be provided
- How and when reviewed
- Integrated Strategic Planning

Finance and Budgeting

- Progress to date in developing next year's budget
- Advice of any budget meetings or workshops scheduled to be held in the next few months
- How items are listed for budget consideration

- How and when budgeted items are reviewed during each financial year
- Financial reports

Council Policies

- Explanation of how and when reviewed
- Council delegations to committees or CEO
- Confidential Information

Management Policies

- The distinction, if any, made between council policies and management policies

Requests for Works and Services

- How requests are lodged by elected members

The Council and State Government

- Explanation of the relationship between local and State Government
- Introduction to legislation that affect local government operations

Department of Local Government and Communities

- Explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the Department
- Contact details of the Department
- Local Government Reform
- Reform aims and objectives
- Legislative changes
- Guides, Tools and Funding
- Integrated Strategic Planning

Regional Development Commission (outside metropolitan area)

- Explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the Regional Development Commissions
- Contact details of the local Regional Development Commission

The Council and the Commonwealth Government

- Explanation of the relationship between local and Commonwealth Government

Obtaining Advice and Information

- Mayor/President for political and elected member issues
- CEO for policy, governance, organisation and employee management and general issues
- Senior employees for appropriate specialist issues
- The Department of Local Government and Communities can be contacted if the elected member feels they need comment or advice on an issue and they have exhausted all avenues within their own local government
- Freedom of Information legislation
- Access to and limits on inspection of council documents
- Newsletters
- Council's Information Bulletins

Networking

- Looking beyond the council for sources of information
- Community organisations
- Other relevant organisations
- Other local governments and regional local government (if one has been constituted for the area)
- Regional organisations and groups
- Conferences and seminars
- List of relevant web sites

8. Your Local Government

History

- Origins of the local government
- Changes in status
- Changes in boundaries
- Publication details of relevant local history

Size and Population

- Overall area
- Length and type of roads
- Area of parks and gardens
- Demographic trends (population trend, age profile, etc)

Briefing Notes

- Briefing notes on significant issues or projects currently before the council or in progress

Corporate Identity

As reflected in:

- Coat of Arms
- Emblem
- Motto
- Logo

Significant Facilities

- Overview of the significant facilities provided

Significant Events

- Citizenship/Australia Day Ceremonies
Dates and venues
- Annual events
- Calendar of events

Publications

- *Local Government Act 1995* and associated Regulations
- Strategic Plan and Plan for the Future of the district
- Budget Papers (current or future)
- Council's most recent Annual Report
- Local Laws (including Standing Orders)
- Planning Scheme Text and Maps
- Policy Manual
- Register of Delegations of Power or Duty
- Code of Conduct
- Minutes of recent council and committee meetings
- Councillor Request for Works and Services Memorandum Book (or equivalent)
- Other relevant department publications eg. Guidelines, Reform Bulletins, Lessons to be Learnt and other handbooks – visit the DLGC website: www.dlgc.wa.gov.au
- Councillor's Manual by WA Local Government Association (WALGA)
- WA Local Government Directory by WA Local Government Association
- Pocket Diary by Local Government Managers Australia
- Local Community Directory

Related Websites

- WALGA – www.walga.asn.au
- LGMA (WA Division) – www.lgmawa.org.au
- Western Australian Electoral Commission – www.waec.wa.gov.au
- Department of Regional Development and Lands – www.rdl.wa.gov.au

These guidelines are also available on the Department's website at www.dlgc.wa.gov.au



About the Guideline series

This document and others in the series are intended as a guide to good practice and should not be taken as a compliance requirement. The content is based on Department officer knowledge, understanding, observation of, and appropriate consultation on contemporary good practice in local government. Guidelines may also involve the Department's views on the intent and interpretation of relevant legislation.

All guidelines are subject to review, amendment and re-publishing as required. Therefore, comments on any aspect of the guideline are welcome. Advice of methods of improvement in the area of the guideline topic that can be reported to other local governments will be especially beneficial.

For more information about this and other guidelines, contact the Local Government Regulation and Support Branch at:

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